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Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 2014; 304 pp.: \$29.95: 9780674599222 (hbk)

Driven out

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Let me first say that Sassen's latest book makes a great read. Despite the magnitude of her endeavour – to understand the mechanisms of today's global economy and its effects in as seemingly diverse areas as the land, the seas, home ownership and migration – and the ambitiousness of her claims – that there are deeper systemic trends involved in all these areas – her arguments come across vividly and clearly. Without much jargon, she clearly develops her argument in a straightforward and compelling manner. It is a book that both seduces and provokes. It seduces due to the simplicity of the arguments and the weight of the evidence. If the reader was in any way in doubt of the scope of the present expulsions taking place – in the economy, in nature and at the level of whole populations – these doubts are driven out by an outstanding amount of facts and figures: figures that tell us how many people were incarcerated in private prisons in the United States, maps that show the different populations of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) by country of asylum, maps of the Aral Sea over a 20-year span. While being seductive, her argument is also provocative; does she really claim that there are deeper, hidden systemic dynamics that drive all these figures? Are we talking grand theory again? This is certainly a brave and provocative endeavour. To this I tip my hat.

Sassen argues that the phenomena in the new global economy that lead to expulsions are global in scale and have a number of commonalities. The aim of the book is therefore, through thorough empirical evidence, not only to demonstrate the scope of expulsions in the modern economy but also to tease out the common 'systemic dynamics' that underlie them. What these dynamics precisely are is left open for interpretation, as she does not start in grand theory or conceptual debates. I find this refreshing and sympathetic, and it makes a pleasant change from other authors who have tried to make similar arguments, from Marx over Wallerstein to Hardt and Negri, Bourdieu and Bauman, who all start with grand theoretical claims and try to make the evidence fit their claims. It does, however, surprise me that Sassen does not engage with any of these authors. In which ways is her analysis of late modern capitalism similar to Hardt and Negri's (2000) Deleuzian understanding of Empire? While they seem to mean that we all are 'swept

into' Empire through Foucauldian processes of normalisation, Sassen explores how global capitalism not only includes and dominates but also creates expulsions. This has echoes to the classic debates among Marxist development theories where world system theories (Wallerstein, 1979) and various dependency theories (Frank, 1980) and centre-periphery theories (Amin, 1976) debated whether or not the third world through colonialism had been incorporated in the capitalist world system – resulting in exploitation and lack of development – or had been kept outside the capitalist system as a reservoir of cheap labour and natural resources through primitive accumulation – similarly resulting in exploitation and lack of development. In other words, Sassen appears to be arguing that a reversal is taking place, where large sections of society are being pushed outside the global capitalist economy. But in which ways does this differ from and contribute to earlier debates?

Also, the concept of expulsions reverberates with other discussions on the exclusion of entire populations from the global economy, rendering them 'human waste' (Bauman, 2000), 'L'homme jetable' (Balibar, 1998), 'urban outcasts' (Wacquant, 2008) or 'the undesirables' (Agier, 2011). How does Sassen's concept relate to these other understandings of expulsion? I will not provide an attempt at analysing the conceptual differences but rather encourage Sassen to engage with them and reflect on what she brings to the floor, which they do not. One aspect of Sassen's analysis that I found interesting, and that probably distinguishes it from most other neo-Marxist analyses of global capitalism, is her claim that it is not only the human waste, the scum of the earth, the lumpen-proletariat, the irregular migrants and refugees who experience expulsion. Also, members of the home-owning middle classes are exposed to expulsion, she shows. In other words, while others may claim that certain groups are excluded from globalisation and capitalism to become 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998), Sassen bravely demonstrates how global capitalism actually creates the expulsion of what traditionally is the core of capitalist systems – the lower middle classes. With the financial crisis and the melt down of the inflated housing market, large sections of the home-owning middle classes in the Global North were effectively driven out not only of their homes but also of global capitalism as such.

So what are the mechanisms behind these expulsions? One of the more compelling arguments is that the immense complexity of today's global capitalism actually creates very simple brutal expulsions. In other words, while complexity is often used to define globalisation and often also used as an excuse for lack of action against the harsh effects of globalisation, she shows how it may in fact create very crude and brutal mechanisms that lead to expulsions. There is nothing subtle about the conflicts that drive millions of people to leave their homes and live in refugee camps. There is nothing complex or subtle in the millions of young people in Southern Europe who are left outside the labour market. And there is no complexity in vast stretches of sea and land being turned into wasteland/sea. In many ways, today's global capitalism is similar to primitive accumulation, Sassen argues. As mentioned above, she seems to imply that a reversal is taking place – but now at another, more complex level. In the years after World War Two, Sassen argues, capitalism depended on mass production and on mass consumption, which meant that it depended on creating and incorporating a large working and middle class. These were to provide qualified labour, and even more importantly, they

were supposed to consume the products of capitalism, keeping it alive. The welfare state in different guises was instrumental in this project of keeping an able and willing population of labour and consumption going. Since the 1980s, however, we have seen a shift towards elementary extraction (of land, minerals and even bodies) and primitive accumulation at a global scale. Marred by the legal and technical complexities of the new global order, the aim of global capital is to overcome such legal and technical hindrances in its search for profit. Only the biggest and most experienced firms are able to do so, whether it is about having the legal capacities to circumvent labour laws, land rights or environment clauses or whether it is the technical capacities to exploit the land and the seas on a massive scale. The sad paradox is that these complexities have very simple and brutal results. While the working class in the welfare state was exploited 'softly' because it was needed for future exploitation, the underclass today is subject to brutal expulsion. Similarly, the land may have been exploited earlier. But investments were also put into the land in order to secure future exploitation. Today, we are experiencing simple exploitation that only focuses on the here and now. We may talk of predatory capitalism on a global scale.

Sassen claims that decision makers 'are part of a larger assemblage of institutional changes' (p. 77) and 'are caught up in a sticky web of systemic logics' (p. 78). While we may all agree on such a statement about the functioning of power, I would be more interested to know more about *how* these assemblages work and what the nature of deeper systemic systems is. These are themes that political scientists have always been grappling with; how do systems work? What drives them? I think that she gives a hint of an answer in the suggestion that complexity in itself creates brutality, and this is probably the most valuable contribution of the book. I hope it can be used more actively to engage with these longstanding debates in political theory and in social science as such.

While Sassen does not engage with theoretical debates, she certainly engages with empirical data. The facts and figures are overwhelming and convincing. Who would want to argue against such massive factual evidence? This again is a refreshing change from others – such as Agamben, Hardt and Negri and Bauman just to mention a few – who scratch the surface and make sweeping claims about the state of the world today. Sassen's data are humbling, but they are also intimidating for better and for worse. Hopefully, they may intimidate decision makers – in government, in Brussels and in the World Bank – to take issues of expulsion seriously. But they also intimidate me – the reader who is not versed in statistics and number crunching – into accepting her claims and arguments. Who would dare, after all, to argue against such vast evidence? However, after my first reaction of awe and conviction, a sneaky feeling crept up; what if the figures are manipulated? What if she is simply trying to prove a point by finding the right figures to impress naive readers like me? Just as the book – in its aim to be straightforward and polemic – steers clear of long theoretical debates, it also refrains from explicit methodological considerations. In that sense, we are never quite sure how the evidence was gathered and on what premises. Although it would be a far reach for me to criticise the book's empirical evidence given my lack of expertise in quantitative methods, I still feel uncomfortable with such figures being used in an argument without knowing the methods behind them.

Having now reflected on the book's merits and its limitations, let me finally reflect on a question that the author poses in her conclusion. In itself, I find the idea of posing a question on the last page of a book fascinating.

I want to conclude with a question: what are the spaces of the expelled? They are invisible to the standard measures of our modern states and economies. But they should be made conceptually visible (p. 222).

She goes on to argue that while conceptually invisible, there may be hope for new beginnings in making these spaces visible. These questions are central, I believe, both analytically and politically, that is to say in terms of finding ways to grasp what is left outside – expelled – and in terms of rethinking resistance and alternative futures.

Once made superfluous, these populations of expulsion are often confined in exceptional spaces in prisons, refugee camps, asylum centres, deportation camps, housing estates or ghettos. These are all spaces that are outside the normal and that have the aim of containing and controlling what has been driven out of the normal through processes of expulsion. Such spaces never just 'emerge' – as opposed to squatter camps or shanty-towns; they are the result of political decisions. But what is the relationship between these planned camps and the self-settled zones on the margins of society? While there obviously is a difference in the purpose and creation of them, they may both be the result of similar dynamics of brutal expulsion. Although no political authority has decided to settle a specific population in a squatter camp, they are settling there due to the processes that Sassen describes. Furthermore, once inside the camps, prisons, ghettos and slums, the complexity of lived life may blur the boundaries between them. There is a tendency in the literature on camps to see them from above, from the outside and reduce them to the 'nomos of our times'. We tend to see them as total institutions, controlled by bureaucratic logics, reducing the life inside them to bare life without agency or political subjectivity. Reality, however, is more complex. Sociality and political subjectivities are (re-) created inside these spaces of confinement. Refugees get married, join political parties, accumulate wealth or lose wealth and generally live lives inside what seem at first glance to be desolate camps. In prisons – in particular in the Global South – inmates organise and participate in beauty pageants and get involved in gangs and illegal trade, all of which is productive of social and political life. In other words, the spaces of the expelled are not indeed the same as other spaces but neither are they simply non-spaces. I am not able to answer Sassen's question unequivocally, but the best description may be that they are marked by temporariness and suspension while creating room for new identities and subjectivities.

As for visibility, indeed, they often are conceptually invisible. They may also be politically and socially invisible. We must, however, hesitate to perceive visibility as inherently liberating and invisibility as inherently oppressive. Enlightenment has always privileged the visible, seeking to shed light on ever-increasing parts of life – from far-away galaxies that can show us the big bang to the innermost parts of our DNA. Similarly, it seems logical that we must have concepts to 'shed light' on the expelled, to make them visible both scientifically and politically, as if light and knowledge in itself were politically emancipating (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2003; West and Sanders, 2003). What if, however, the expelled prefer invisibility and obscurity to

visibility and clarity? By going beneath the radar and by slipping between the categories of definition, they may have room to become something else. While refugees in camps and inmates in prisons are rendered invisible to mainstream society by being physically removed from the streets, they are conceptually visible and visible as objects of government, be it private security firms or the UNHCR. Clandestine refugees and the homeless on the other hand are invisible to the modes of government because they slip between the masks of control. Meanwhile, they are visible – on occasion at least – to anyone and everyone, potentially reminding us of the brutal expulsions taking place right in front of us.

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Expelling the Surplus

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As I write this review, the refugee crisis of illegalized children continues, as the United States is embroiled in debate over the possible deportation of tens of thousands of young people: potentially forcing them to return to countries from which they were already expelled by violence—principally Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. This crisis is being framed as an incursion of lawlessness into the United States. The case that we as a nation have no responsibility for these young lives is only a case that can be made by ignoring historical context: by erasing the role the United States has played in the region through paramilitary drug enforcement, through a labor market that demands the infusion of fresh bodies, through support for rightist governments.